

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 063427
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:NAVELIOTES:JFC
APPROVED BY INR:HHS SAUNDERS
S - A. HOUGHTON
S/S-O:JETHYDEN

-----079687 112208Z /63

O P 112202Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 063427

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, XF, IS, LE

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN LEBANON

1. DURING COURSE OF MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN ON MARCH 9, SECRETARY RAISED SUBJECT OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. HE NOTED THAT WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS THERE. WEIZMAN NOTED THAT ISRAEL WAS QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION. HE POINTED OUT THAT SAIQA UNITS WERE LOCATED NEAR THE ISRAELI BORDER IN SEVERAL PLACES. WEIZMAN EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF NUMBERS AS LOCATION.

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2. IN COMMENTING ON RECENT BATTLE AT MARUN AR-RA'S, WEIZMAN NOTED THAT THE CHRISTIANS UNFORTUNATELY HAD "MISBEHAVED" AND LOST. HE SAID THAT IN THIS VENTURE THE CHRISTIANS DID NOT HAVE THE ENCOURAGEMENT OR SUPPORT OF THE ISRAELIS AND PERHAPS THIS BLOODY NOSE WILL TEACH THEM A LESSON. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD TO RESIST HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE ISRAELI MILITARY TO GO TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE

CHRISTIANS.

3. WEIZMAN EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT TRY TO CAUSE TROUBLE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AS A MEANS OF BLOWING UP THE EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS RESPECT, HE ASSURED THE SECRETARY THAT ,SRAEL IS NOT GOING TO INITIATE ANY MILITARY ACTION. HE SAID THAT AS LONG AS THERE ARE NO PROVOCATIONS FROM THE PALESTINIANS, ISRAEL WILL HOLD ITS FIRE. HE NOTED THE ISRAELI CONCERN ABOUT ARTILLERY MOVING SOUTH WHICH WAS BEING USED AGAINST CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. HE HOPED SITUATION DID NOT DEVELOP WHERE THIS ARTILLERY WOULD POSE SERIOUS THREAT TO CHRISTIANS OR ISRAELIS MIGHT HAVE TO RESPOND. HE ALSO HOPED THAT THERE WERE NO ROCKETS LAUNCHED INTO ISRAEL.

4. AS CONCERNS ISRAELI REACTION, WEIZMAN TOOK INITIATIVE TO REFER TO IDF BOMBING OF AL-IZZIAH AND SAID THAT SUCH A REACTION WAS NOT THE INTENT OF THE GOI, SUGGESTING THAT THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND.

5. WEIZMAN CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT ISRAEL WOULD DO ITS BEST TO KEEP THE LID ON THE SOUTH. HE ASKED THAT WE DISCUSS SITUATION WITH SYRIANS IN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO RESTRAIN THE PALESTINIANS. THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT SINCE THE SADAT INITIATIVE, THE SYRIANS HAVE RELAXED THEIR HOLD ON THE FATAH IN THE SOUTH BUT, CLEARLY, ASSAD DOES
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NOT WANT A BLOWUP IN THAT AREA.

6. IN CONTEXT OF EXPRESSING ISRAEL'S CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN BEIRUT, WEIZMAN NOTED THAT HADDAD AND SHIDIAQ HAD ASKED ISRAEL TO SUPPORT THEM IF THEY DECLARED SOUTH LEBANON AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY. WEIZMAN SAID ISRAEL HAD REFUSED. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHRISTIANS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE063427
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NAVELIOTES:JFC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780110-0099
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780378/aaaacodz.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: aac018c9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3359488
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTHERN LEBANON
TAGS: MARR, XF, IS, LE, (WEIZMAN, EZER)
To: TEL AVIV BEIRUT MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/aac018c9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014